

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
EXTENSION SERVICE DIVISION OF COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

HOW EXTENSION MAY PARTICIPATE IN THE
VARIOUS PLANS FOR CONSERVATION*

By C. B. Smith
Assistant Director of Extension Work

The staff of my office, which largely directs my activities, has selected for the general theme of this conference the subject of conservation, having in mind primarily, I take it, the conservation of wildlife, but also, probably, the conservation of soil, of forests and plants, and perhaps also the conservation of human energy and such things. They have asked me to open this phase of the leaders' conference with a paper on How Extension May Participate in the Various Plans for Conservation. That is probably where they made a mistake, for my greatest concern is for nature appreciation; and by that I mean particularly an appreciation of the common things that daily surround us, such as the plants and birds and trees and swamps, deserts, mountains, seas, sunsets, morning skies, spider webs, snowflakes, storm, cloud, and stars. I have a notion that if we can develop an appreciation of these things in our hearts -- the common everyday things that surround us and in which we are immersed -- we will just naturally become conservationists. We can't wantonly destroy the things we understand and love.

It adds immensely to our satisfaction when we can call plants by their names and know them when we see them; if we can recognize the birds that sing to us and add so much to the joy of living; if we can tell their songs and calls and recognize them on sight and call them by their true names. Then, too, in our strolls through the fields and over the hills and down the ravines and gullies, if we can recognize the rocks under our feet, we are walking with the ages and our minds are carried back a million years in speculation and wonder. Then, what shall I say of the stars that illumine the heavens -- stars that we look upon every night of our

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lives from childhood to old age? Shall they always remain just a jumble of heavenly lights; or can we, by study and observation, bring out law and order among them and understand their mystery and know some of them by name? My thought is, that to know and understand all these things would be a continuous joy to us from youth to age. I would have every extension worker and every rural boy and girl make of these common things that surround us lifelong associates and friends. Not only would such knowledge enrich our own lives, but would enrich the lives of all those with whom we associate and would make us welcome in every society.

I think as I do about these things because statistics tell us that nearly 50 percent of the farmers in the United States do not now, and probably never will, sell on the average as much as \$1,000 worth of produce from the farm each year. Out of that \$1,000, they have to pay for their machinery, supplies, clothing, education, doctor's bills, entertainment, and what little traveling they do. Compare that with your own income and you will see it is pitifully low. We are trying, through extension and otherwise, to increase this income, and we may succeed some; but, even if we should help in increasing this average income as much as 50 percent, which would be far more than we have done in the past, the income would still be pitifully low.

It is probable then, we can't add greatly to the money wealth of nearly 50 percent of our farmers. The question, then, may be asked: What can we do for them that will help them get the most out of life? That is where we take up the work this morning. I believe it possible to enrich men's minds, their intellectual, their social, their recreational, and their spiritual life, even though we may not greatly enlarge their pocketbooks.

And, in that enrichment, we may well begin with the youth of the Nation, hence the concern of this group with such things as nature appreciation, which leads, naturally, to understanding and we hope, also, to conservation - the subject of this conference.

The pursuit of knowledge may not be so exciting as the pursuit of goods and prosperity; most of us are not likely to get far in the pursuit of gold, but we can go far in the pursuit of knowledge - a kind of wealth that all the world admires and wishes they had - and that pursuit of knowledge may well begin in our own back yard, with the plants and insects and birds and animals and soils and rocks that are to be found there. And I would stress, over and over again, the thought that your own observation of these things, -- how an anthill is built, the food different birds feed on, what various clouds portend as to oncoming weather, the changing position of the Great Bear in the heavens -- these studies, these observations by you, supplement and go beyond book-learning, because they constitute the data out of which books come.

And, first of all, I want to compliment you on the long way many of you have already come in this field. What you have already done is inspiring. This week's program, we hope, will carry us all still more

deeply into this work. Some of you may want to make nature appreciation and conservation a special project in your work. I hope that you may not only have these special projects but that nature appreciation, nature observation and study, may be a part of every boys' and girls' project from the youngest to the oldest groups.

We have made excerpts of what many of you are doing from the extension reports you have sent in for the year 1934, so that each one of you may have a copy and see what the other leader is doing. We have not yet made excerpts from the 1935 reports, but expect to do so and that a number of States not mentioned in the 1934 excerpts will be included in the excerpts for 1935.

I shall cite now a few examples, showing some of the features of nature appreciation and conservation observed in some of the States, which will serve to show what is included in the work and how it is conducted.

Iowa, State College of Agriculture, it seems, has a wildlife conservation specialist. That institution states:

"Five counties located in different sections of Iowa conducted the conservation of wildlife project during the year 1934.

"Wildlife and conservation work was conducted both as an activity and a project. This was relatively new work in Iowa, and it has for its object the establishing of a greater appreciation of Iowa's out-of-doors resources and to develop greater appreciation for the State conservation and wildlife program.

"In some counties, especially in the southern part of the State, particular emphasis was placed on quail work. This was carried on in cooperation with wildlife conservation of the extension service and the fish and game department in Des Moines.

"Similar work on pheasants was conducted in other counties. With the quail work the members placed emphasis on seeing that adequate cover was given to the birds and arrangements were made for winter feed supplies for the quails. With the pheasant club, the members secured hatchings of pheasants' eggs and, after raising the young pheasants to a certain age, freed them in their particular county.

"In Hamilton and Wright Counties, winter feeding stations for the upland game birds were built. Exhibits of these were made at the county corn-husking contests. In the drought areas, 4-H members cooperated with the local game wardens in the winter feeding of quail."

In Minnesota, the extension forester reported:

"There are 45,000 boys and girls in 4-H work. These youngsters were all exposed to the possible opportunities in 4-H conservation through meetings sponsored by the State club people in the respective counties. These were followed by district meetings attended by delegates from the various clubs. Here we presented definite lessons and definite projects that could be adopted. In addition to lectures on the various phases of forestry; game and fish, Federal and State bulletins, together with mimeographed suggestions by this department for carrying on the work, were distributed.

"As a result, 10,000 youngsters enrolled in 4-H conservation and made definite contributions toward rebuilding Minnesota's resources, having to do with the raising of wild upland game; providing needed shelter areas, feed, care, and protection; restoration of game areas both upland and water; reclamation of shelter and feeding areas; reforestation; erosion control; wind-break and shelterbelt projects; protection against fire, disease, and predators.

"The educational value of these projects cannot be overestimated. An intensive study of trees; shrubs and weeds; collection of tree samples; study and identification of native birds, their food, economic importance, and their enemies; and elimination of predators through control measures were made. The leaving and supplying of feed and the planting of feed for upland game on the farm, and maintenance of feeding stations during the winter months, have again brought forward the importance of farming areas and the place the farmer can and should play in future game restoration."

The State club leader for Minnesota, Mr. Erickson, reports a State-wide conservation contest for 4-H club members. Suggested activities for this contest are given as follows:

- "1. Conservation of wildlife as a feature of each monthly program.
- "2. The campaign of obeying all game laws in the community and cooperation with the game officials.
- "3. Making a survey of wildlife in the community, each member of the local club taking some part.
- "4. Each member selecting some individual line of work.
- "5. Planting trees and shrubs along streams.
- "6. Planting and protecting wild flowers, either by making a wild-flower garden at home or in the forest.
- "7. Getting acquainted with and protecting some kind of seasonal bird or animal.

- "8. Winter feeding of game when food is scarce, and the construction of feeding places.
- "9. Making a study of and giving correct information on birds and animals considered harmful, but which are really helpful.
- "10. Developing bird and animal refuges.
- "11. Locating and saving pheasant nests, and those of grouse and quail, when cutting hay and alfalfa.
- "12. Fire prevention and the elimination of fire hazards, creating a sentiment in the community against unnecessary fires.
- "13. Planting material desirable for cover and food, and saving nesting material.
- "14. Protecting of game and songbirds from stray house cats.
- "15. Constructing and erecting bird houses, and planning bird-house exhibits.
- "16. Protection of fish, and rescue work.
- "17. Planting and developing wild shrubs and trees bearing fruit, such as chokecherries, pin cherries, etc.
- "18. Rearing of game birds.

"From the point of view of our State 4-H staff, says Mr. Erickson, it was one of the most satisfactory 4-H club events that we have ever held in our State. Six of the State winners were given trips to the National Club Congress, and the members in the winning clubs in the four districts of the State receive a year's subscription to one of the fine nature magazines.

"A majority of our 98 county fairs made a feature of the 4-H conservation exhibits and demonstrations. Seven counties made rather extensive 4-H conservation exhibits at the State fair. Reports of the leaders of 4-H clubs in Minnesota indicate that 25,000 of the members of 4-H clubs took some part in this work during 1934.

"Newspapers over the State have been unusually interested in this enterprise and have given it much publicity.

"The conservation of wildlife activity has been one of the most popular features that we have ever added to our 4-H club program.

"Dean W. C. Coffey made the statement that, in his opinion, it was probably the best feature that we have ever added to our 4-H work. This feature has brought new interest to the general 4-H club program on the part of those, both in town and country, who are especially interested in the conservation of wildlife. We have had a wonderful cooperation from the Sir Izaak Walton League and the various game protective associations in the State.

"The reports of leaders indicate that 75 percent of all 4-H members in Minnesota have taken some part in the activity."

In the 1934 excerpts, you will find many more details regarding this outstanding piece of work in Minnesota.

Nebraska held its first conservation and restoration of wildlife 4-H camp at Seward in 1935, with about 100 4-H youth and adults in attendance. One day of the camp was designated as wild-animal day; another was dedicated to birds, plants were the subject on the third day of the camp; while the fourth was fish day, in which a fishing contest was staged.

Mr. Hulbert, assistant extension director, in his 1934 report on nature work in New Jersey, makes the following statements:

"Through directed activity and observation we are endeavoring to have the club member gain, at first hand, an intimate and intelligent knowledge of his surroundings. His interests and attention are directed toward plant, tree, bird, animal, and insect life. He is led to observe carefully the relation between the plant and tree growth in his immediate environment and the birds and animals that live among the trees, in the meadows, and even in his back yard.

"The young people are encouraged to learn the different kinds of birds by observing them at nesting time, and to learn their feeding habits and know the effect of birds on the control of insect pests--the usefulness of birds. The animals that live in the woods, along the streams, in the meadows and hedgerows, on the farms become objects of interest and study. The identification of trees by their leaves, blossoms, bark, and habits of growth comes to be an interesting game. The identification of birds by their songs and their calls awakens a new intimacy and contact between the boy or girl and these feathered creatures and creates a greater sympathy for and interest in the preservation of wildlife.

"As these interests grow a very natural step in the mind of the boy or girl is a desire to build a bird house, provide food for the birds when the ground is covered with snow and ice, and to protect them from predatory animals like the cat. After they have become interested in the different kinds of trees it becomes an easy step to the collection of wood specimens, learning about the uses of the different kinds of wood and then to the conservation and even the care of wood lots and the protection of the forests from fires.

"Thousands of boys and girls in New Jersey are gaining this intimate contact with the plant and animal life of their neighborhood."

In New York, the extension entomologist reports that:

"Lectures on birds are usually arranged through the county agents. These lectures are illustrated with slides

or motion pictures, or both. During the last year we have added 1,000 feet more to our bird film, bringing the total of our sound motion pictures to 4,000 feet, and we are becoming more and more convinced of the value of this form of material for bringing before the public the important facts connected with the value and conservation of our native birds.

"In the spring of 1934 Mr. Brand published his book of bird song, which contains two phonograph records on which are the songs of 35 native birds. These records are the first ever published of native American-bird songs. They have been well received by the public, and during the past year much additional material has been gathered and the methods of recording improved."

The club leader from Oklahoma reports as follows:

"Of late 4-H club members have taken a tremendous interest in the great out-of-doors and are giving some time to the study of trees, birds, insects, and weeds which are found everywhere.

"It is true that the country is a much more beautiful place to 4-H club members if they are able to know the trees. If they are able to know birds by their whistle or call, by their plumage, by their nesting habits and by their 'menu', it makes a difference as to their appreciation of rural communities."

"Familiarity with insects and weeds, too, is important, and interesting. Club members are learning the names and habits of insects which are common in our localities, the damage they do and the control methods which are best to use in case they menace our crops."

I needn't go on with this recital of work in the States. You will get more details and reports of other work in the States in the excerpts to be distributed to you.

The final thought I want to leave with you is that we now have a million and forty thousand boys and girls and rural youth enrolled in various clubs; every one of those members should be given opportunity and encouraged to observe and study nature in all her moods. We can help this group to some degree to increase their income. We probably can enrich them most by getting them acquainted with the things that surround them and by lending our encouragement to each one for individual studies in these fields.

We need, first, to have this appreciation for nature ourselves before we can inspire anyone else. I hope the day may come when every boy and girl in school and elsewhere may learn as much and know as much about robins, that are a part of their daily life for most of the year, as they do about the battle of Bunker Hill, or the rivers of Africa.

